

'False Strength': Exploring the Role of Problem Substance Use in the Personal Recovery in Adults Transitioning out of Chronic Homelessness: A Transatlantic Qualitative Study.

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Mental Health
Foundation



Yale



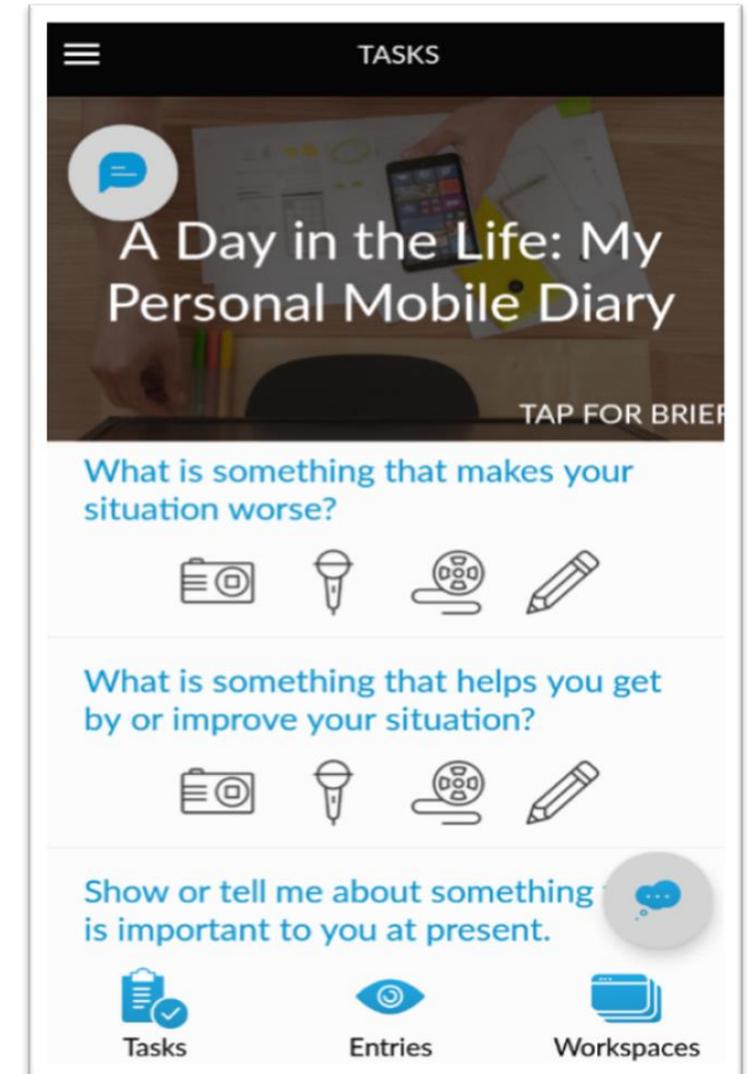
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My Transatlantic Qualitative Study: Context and Objectives

- **RESEARCH CONTEXT:**
 - ❖ Complex needs in homelessness and multiple disadvantage;
 - ❖ Dual recovery.
- **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:** To understand the experience of personal recovery in individuals with serious mental illness who have been chronically homeless
- **DESIGN AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS:**

18 (4 female)	= Sample size
5	= Data collection sites (NYC and Glasgow)
45	= Individual interviews
48 years old	= Mean participant age
11 years	= Average time spent homeless
12 or 67%	= History of problem substance use



Dimensions of Personal Recovery and the Role of Problem Substance Use

1. Safety, security and sense of constancy

'Addiction and alcoholism-they have its own power over you.'

2. Reflection, self-knowledge and envisioning a better life

'I didn't realise...about the depression and the anxieties. So right away, you know, self-medication.'

3. Learning positive coping skills and unlearning negative coping behaviours

'I cut myself off [...] It was a relief from everything else around me [...] I was just drinking heavily-every day as soon as I got up just to block it out.'

4. Finding meaning and purpose in life

'It's [drinking] like an escape for me. It's escaping reality. That's what the drink does for me- takes me away from what I'm stuck in just now.'

5. Social and emotional connectedness

6. Restoring a positive sense of self

Drugs as 'false strength' and a 'crutch'

Experiences of Substance Use, Homelessness and Recovery

❖ Recovery as an ambiguous and frightening process:

'Recovery is fearful to me because it is the other side of life that I never experience.'

❖ Dual recovery and envisioning a better life:

'I felt power. I felt like I could have gotten into the ring and beat Mike Tyson. That's what it gave me [...] And it's false. It gives you false strength. [...] When it wears off...you gotta go get the next one. And the next one, and the next one...You know...and then....it's gonna stop you from growing.'

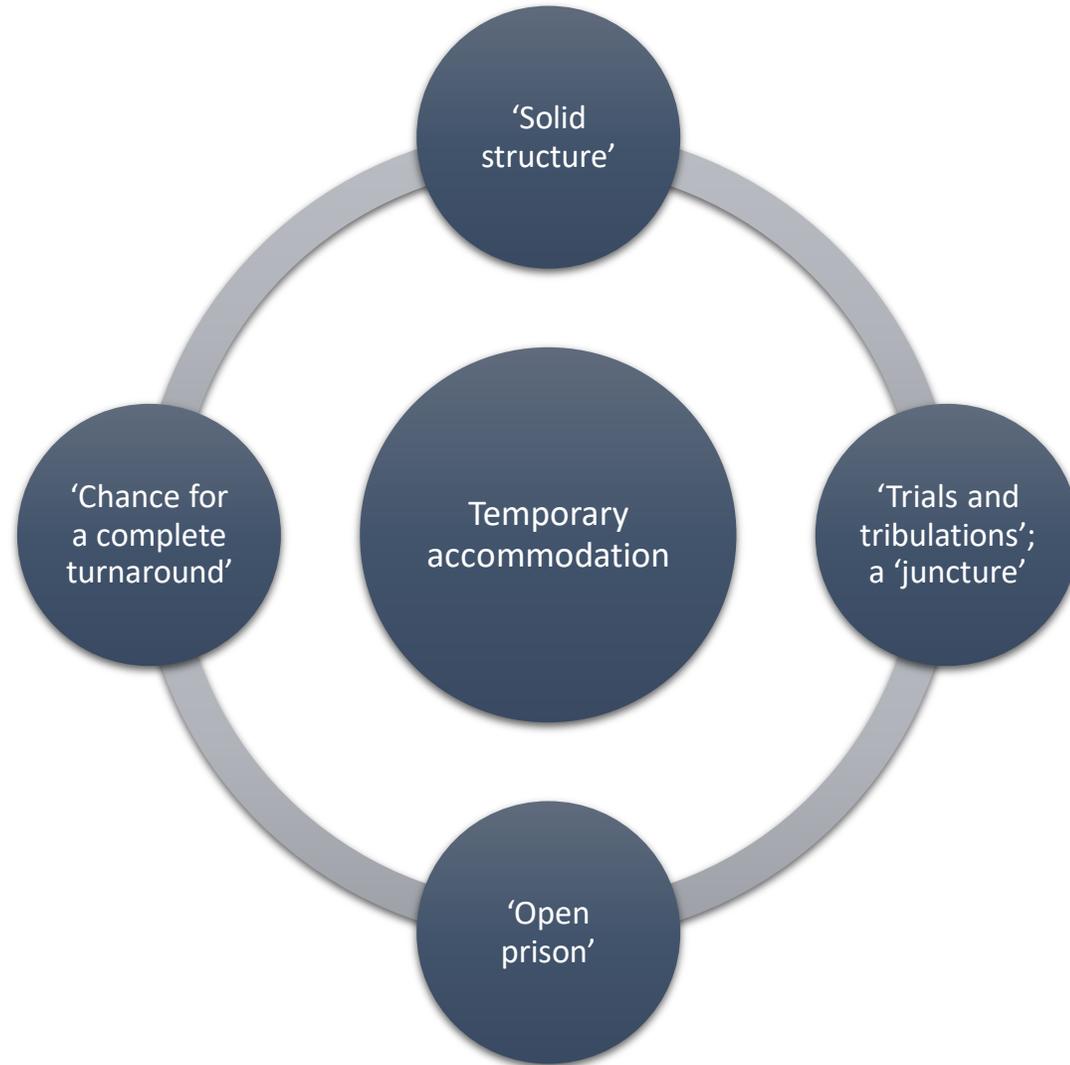
❖ Boredom, social exclusion and substance use



Q: What is something that makes your situation worse?

A: 'Depression, boredom, alcohol.'

Diverse Meanings of Temporary Accommodation in Relation to Recovery



Relational and Institutional Factors Affecting Recovery



Institutional
uncertainty and
complexity



A diverse mix of
appropriate formal
supports



Meaningful
occupational
engagement



Being acknowledged,
heeded, respected,
listened to